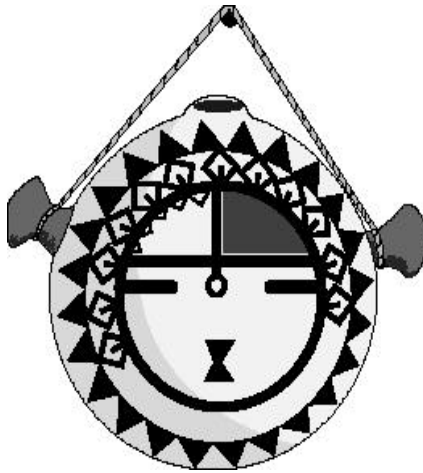


MODULE 4

Cultural Orientation and Tips for Working More Effectively with Tribes



MODULE 4 Cultural Orientation and Tips for Working More Effectively with Tribes

TIME Varies depending on level of detail and number of activities

OBJECTIVES

After completing this module, participants will:

- have a basic understanding of Native American culture.
- understand basic skills for cross-cultural communication and working more effectively with tribes.
- understand important and practical steps to begin working with a tribe.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES AND THEIR ORDER

- Presentation— Overheads 1 to 15 (1 hour)
- Cultural Exercises (30 minutes)
- Cultural Panel (1 to 3 hours)

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

- Overheads/Overhead Projector/Screen
- Participant Notebook with overheads and exercises
- Handouts
 - List for each participant of all tribes located in their region, including contact information
 - List of EPA tribal liaisons/coordinators
- Presenter's Cultural Panel Guide
- Other optional cultural activities



Southwestern Tribes place much importance on the sun, and incorporate its image in their artwork as seen on this clay pot.

CULTURAL ORIENTATION AND TIPS FOR WORKING MORE EFFECTIVELY WITH TRIBES



Talking Points:

- In this module, participants will learn generally about Native American culture. Every Tribe is different, however, collectively Indians share many attributes in their values, way of life, and circumstances. While only direct interaction can really build understanding and respect, this section is intended to help EPA staff begin to appreciate Native American culture and develop skills for effective cross-cultural communication.
- Use of a **Cultural Panel** (of local Tribal representatives) is strongly encouraged to provide EPA staff with an opportunity to have a dialogue with tribal members and learn more about local tribal culture.
- Trainers can decide the appropriate length and placement of the cultural panel activity based on their program design.
- A cultural sensitivity experience can also be accomplished through other methods including:
 - videos;
 - cultural exhibits/displays;
 - outside cultural experts; and
 - internal resources (e.g., EPA American Indian Advisory Council (AIAC)).

Caution: The topics covered on pages 1 - 7 on cultural orientation can contain information that may be sensitive to some participants. If possible, it is recommended that this material be facilitated by a cultural or psychological expert, or use a Native American cultural expert or panel.

Suggestion: For more information, trainers should refer to the Cultural Panel Guide attachment.



What is Culture?

- A way of life
- Culture includes:
 - ▶ shared history;
 - ▶ language;
 - ▶ values and attitudes;
 - ▶ religion;
 - ▶ law and legal systems;
 - ▶ society; and
 - ▶ economic and political systems.



Talking Points:

- The culture of a people is the sum total of their living experiences within their own society. It could be described as “the way of life” of a people and includes a vast array of behaviors and beliefs. It is important to keep in mind some critical factors that may differ greatly from culture to culture:
 - ▶ shared history;
 - ▶ language (spoken, written, nonverbal);
 - ▶ values and attitudes toward materialism, time, work, change, dress, foods;
 - ▶ religion— rituals, sacred objects, taboos, beliefs;
 - ▶ law and legal systems;
 - ▶ society— mobility, class systems, kinship systems, institutions, education; and
 - ▶ economic and political.
- An important aspect of culture is that it is a shared way of understanding the world and defines the boundaries of different groups. This is why, when people talk about culture, they tend to describe the differences and not the similarities.

Optional Cultural Flower

Exercise: Ask participants to identify the cultures of which they are a part. Explain culture as a broad concept, not just as race. Give examples of cultural groups (gender, class, organizational, professional, regional).

Brainstorm as a group a list of different cultures. Use this list as a link to describe how our own cultures’ may affect how we perceive other cultures.

Use EPA as an example of a culture and how the sometimes bureaucratic approach may affect how we interact with other cultures.

For more information, trainers should refer to the Cultural Flower Exercise attachment.



Understanding Culture



- Culture is best understood through direct interaction
 - Qualities that contribute to understanding culture include:
 - open-mindedness;
 - sense of humor;
 - communicativeness; and
 - flexibility and adaptability.
-

Talking Points:

- A sensitivity to the importance and uniqueness of each Tribe's culture is critical for those working with Tribes to develop and implement environmental protection programs in Indian Country. Culture will be learned more effectively through direct interaction with Tribal members.
- In general, EPA personnel should keep in mind that the following qualities will help when trying to understand a new culture:
 - Open-mindedness—the ability to keep one's opinions flexible and receptive to new stimuli;
 - Sense of humor—using humor can help in dealing in tense or stressful situations;
 - Communicativeness—the ability and willingness to communicate one's feelings and thoughts to others, verbally or non-verbally and to listen; and
 - Flexibility and adaptability—the ability to respond to or tolerate the ambiguity of new situations, keep options open, and minimize judgmental behavior or attitudes.
- Sensitivity and respect for Tribal culture is critical for effective working relationships that can lead to strong environmental protection programs.

Optional Cultural Exercise

“Zawambia Exercise:” See Trainer's Guide for Zawambia Exercise in appendix. This powerful 30 minute exercise can help provide participants with a cultural sensitivity experience in the classroom. Be sure to link learning from the exercise with the “Understanding Culture” page 3, “Cross-Cultural Communication” page 6 materials.



Understanding Native American Culture

- Strong connection to the environment
 - Health, culture, and the environment are linked
 - Subsistence lifestyle
-



Talking Points:

- Each Tribe's culture is unique, and this uniqueness should not be overlooked. However, there are certain attributes of Native American culture that can be recognized because they characterize a way of life that is different from non-Indians. Aside from the concepts discussed in Module 1 (Treaties, sovereignty, trust responsibility, and government-to-government relationship) and the six phases of history with the Federal Government as discussed in Module 2, an important common theme within Native American culture is a strong connection to the environment.
- It is important for EPA staff to understand that the vitality of Native American culture, health, religion, and the environment are inextricably linked. This concept often affects the way that Tribal members approach and evaluate environmental programs and protection.
- It may be difficult for a Tribe to separate threats to their environment from threats to their health and culture. Many factors make these links much stronger for Tribal members than for non-Indians. Some of these factors are discussed in the next two slides.
- Many Tribes practice a subsistence lifestyle. They use natural resources for subsistence fishing, farming, ranching, hunting, and gathering. Their livelihood is dependent on these resources. Their direct exposure to contaminated resources may be much greater than non-Indians. For example, a typical risk assessment is based on standard assumptions about consumption rates of a suburban population. Such assumptions would probably be inaccurate for a Tribe and also would not reflect the impact to their traditional livelihood that might result from the loss of resources.

Suggestion: This material is best addressed by a Native American speaker or panel. May be omitted if using a cultural panel.



Understanding Native American Culture (continued)

- Natural resources used for medicine and religion
 - Sacred sites
 - Temporal dimension
 - Proprietary information
-



Talking Points (continued):

- Many Tribes use natural resources for medicines and in religious ceremonies. Their faith in the healing and spiritual power of the natural resource depends on its purity. Therefore, not only the health of Native Americans may be at risk if the resource is contaminated, their faith in their medicines and religion also may be threatened.
- Because risks to natural resources and land used by Tribes may also be a risk to the continuity and integrity of their culture, Tribal members often consider and set environmental goals that account for a greater dimension of time than non-Indians. Many Native Americans consider future generations and the continuation of their culture as dependent on natural resources and the land.
- Knowledge about what, where, and how a Tribe uses natural resources may be proprietary information that the Tribe does not wish to release to EPA for fear the information may be misused (e.g., the medicinal uses of a rare plant, the location of a sacred burial ground). Establishing a methodology for collecting and releasing information may require careful collaboration between the Tribe and EPA.

Suggestion: Refer to references in attachment for further background information on the culture continuum.



Cross-cultural Communication



- Cross-cultural dialogues can lead to misunderstandings because of:
 - ▶ lack of or inaccurate knowledge;
 - ▶ fear of unknown factors;
 - ▶ unconscious assumptions;
 - ▶ stereotyping;
 - ▶ non-verbal communication;
 - ▶ prejudice or bias; and
 - ▶ ethnocentric reactions.
-

Talking Points:

- In many cases, when EPA staff work with Tribal representatives, the EPA staff will be communicating with individuals from a different cultural background. The possibility of misunderstandings are higher when the dialogue occurs between people from different backgrounds. Therefore, cross-cultural communication can be more challenging than our typical conversations.
- We communicate through formal language, through silent language based on culturally determined cues, and through prevailing morals and etiquette. We even evaluate much information on the basis of our own cultural backgrounds. Subtle distinctions can result in misunderstanding.
- Problems in cross-cultural communication occur primarily because people assume that the elements of their own culture are natural, appropriate, and acceptable to others. Other problems can arise from some of the following elements:
 - ▶ lack of or inaccurate knowledge of other person's culture;
 - ▶ fear of unknown factors;
 - ▶ our unconscious assumptions;
 - ▶ stereotyping;
 - ▶ non-verbal communication patterns;
 - ▶ prejudice or bias; and
 - ▶ ethnocentric reactions (discussed in the next slide).

Suggestion: Link to results of Zawambia exercise.



Ethnocentric Reactions

- Ignoring or forgetting about the distinctions between our culture and the other person's culture



Talking Points:

- When we react ethnocentrically, we ignore the distinctions between our own culture and the other person's culture. We assume that others will react the same way we do, that they will operate from the same assumptions, that they will use language and symbols in "our" way. An ethnocentric reaction makes us lose sight of the possibility that our words or actions will be misunderstood and makes us more likely to misunderstand the behavior of others.
- For example, when speaking with a Tribal elder, you may need to allow more time for a response, because Indian elders may respond by using a story or an analogy to demonstrate their point. A second question may disrupt the first question's response. Therefore, if you are in a hurry, you may not get an answer at all.



Cross-cultural Communication: Strategies for Success



- Consider the cultural components that may be different
- Keep an open mind
- Be alert and listen carefully

Talking Points:

- Ideally, each individual would achieve intercultural empathy by immersing themselves in the other individual's culture. However, a more realistic alternative is for those who work with another culture to study the other culture thoroughly prior to engaging in a business relationship.
- When communicating with individuals from a different culture, it is important to remember that they may have different interpretations on some of the following cultural components:
 - ▶ religion and values;
 - ▶ history;
 - ▶ social roles and status;
 - ▶ decision-making customs;
 - ▶ concepts of time;
 - ▶ concepts of personal space; and
 - ▶ body language.
- Although cultural differences can be a barrier to effective communication, problems can be prevented or resolved by maintaining an open mind, staying alert, and listening carefully.



General Tips for Working Successfully with Tribal Governments



- Take time to learn about the tribal government system and infrastructure
 - Take time to know and understand tribal customs and preferences
-

Talking Points:

- Take time to learn about the tribal government system and infrastructure. It is important for EPA staff to understand the political environment in which the tribal government operates (e.g., tribal council, business committees, corporations). Research and learn about the history of the tribes that you will be working with. Initially, your agenda and expectations may be different from the tribe's. For example, the tribal definition of "trust responsibility" may be the cornerstone of what they expect from you, so it is important to strive for mutual understanding on such matters early in the relationship. Like most governments, tribes experience changing priorities with changing administrations. Also, due to a variety of factors, a high turn-over rate occurs frequently in tribal staff. Be aware that such changes may affect your efforts.
- Take time to know and understand Tribal customs and preferences. Always remember that you are a guest of the Tribe that you are visiting. Observe their customs and laws. For example, Tribal meetings often begin and end in prayer and elders are highly respected in their communities. When appropriate, plan your visit so that you have flexibility to participate in a social or cultural event that will help build your understanding and foster trusting relationships. Recognize that Tribes may use a different process to reach decisions. Tribal meetings tend to allow for everyone to express their views. Therefore, meetings or decisions may take longer than anticipated. Flexibility and patience may be needed in your scheduling.

Suggestion: The trainer may want to ask participants to identify examples or resources that might help them act on each tip.

Trainer Tip: An effective way to engage participants is to break them into groups, where each group presents a bullet from this section.



General Tips (continued)

- Find out about past and current federal involvement with the tribe
- Be respectful, predictable, and credible



Talking Points (continued):

- Find out about past and current federal involvement with the tribe. It is important to research what work has already been done with a tribe, to avoid duplicative efforts, and to provide continuity of assistance. Also, consider opportunities for collaboration with other EPA departments or other federal agencies.
- Be respectful, predictable, and credible. Tribes have a history of mistrust of the federal government. Indian people have been hurt by past government initiatives and may be skeptical of new proposals. Trust will be earned over time by demonstrating respect for their values, having a proactive interest in their welfare, and following through on commitments.



General Tips (continued)

- Be sensitive to cross-cultural communication
 - Focus your efforts on helping tribes achieve their priority goals
-



Talking Points (continued):

- Be sensitive to cross-cultural communication. EPA terms, vocabulary, acronyms, and standard operating procedures may not be familiar to a tribe. Therefore, ensure that you develop an understanding of what level of prior involvement, education, and training the tribe has had. Some tribes may need you to limit or explain the use of terms, while other tribes may already have an understanding of the subject matter. Follow the strategies for successful cross-cultural communication discussed earlier in this module.
- Focus your efforts on helping tribes achieve their priority goals. The ultimate goal of protecting the health and environment of tribes may be achieved most effectively when environmental protection is carried out by the tribal government. Within the realm of your authority, focus your efforts on building the capacity of the Tribe to administer and implement environmental protection measures that will help them achieve their priority goals. Whenever possible, bring resources, training, and other assistance to the reservation. In all of your work at EPA, ensure that potential impacts to tribes are considered and that the Tribe is consulted and involved whenever EPA activities could affect their people, land, resources, and/or rights.



General Tips (continued)

- Talk early and often
 - Know when and where to get help
-



Talking Points (continued):

- Talk early and often. Ensure that tribal leadership is involved early in discussing projects, plans, or issues that may affect tribal concerns. Tribal leaders constantly deal with critical competing issues that affect the welfare of their community, and tribal offices may be under-staffed. These factors may make communication difficult; however, establishing lines of communication on key issues is critical for your credibility and the success of EPA's Indian Program.
- Know when and where to get help. The relationship between the federal government and tribal governments is complex and it is important to coordinate early with all parties, including various federal agencies and tribal entities. You may want to consult with your Indian Coordinator, local tribal program, or AIEO for information, guidance and assistance. If you are unsure of how to handle a particular situation during your visit to a reservation, contact your program director or local tribal program for advice.

Handout: Provide a list of tribes located in the participants' region and contact information. Also, provide a list of EPA tribal liaisons/coordinators.



Additional Resources

- Check with your Region or Program Office
-



Talking Points:

- Other resources exist that provide additional guidance on protocols and tips for working effectively with tribal governments. Protocol information can include information on written communication parameters (e.g. who calls Tribal Chair, who signs correspondence); guidance on visits to the reservation (how much notice should be given to tribe); inspection protocols, etc. Offices/Regions are encouraged to develop their own tribal-specific protocols to assist EPA staff in working in Indian Country in their locations. For example, the Region 8 Indian Policy contains a specific regional protocol guideline for dealing with Region 8 tribes.

Suggestion: Have group brainstorm a comprehensive list of resources.



Conclusion

- Approach all tribes with respect and sincerity about forging a relationship
 - Use common sense
 - Explore possibilities and common ground
-



Talking Points:

- Focus on the common goals of environmental protection.
- Try to develop a tribal “buddy” or member of tribe to assist with communication and protocol information.

Cultural Panel Guide

It is critical to provide participants with a direct experience with tribal culture. This can be accomplished through a variety of methods, including use of a tribal cultural panel, training or cultural videos, using Native American experts, cultural exhibits/displays, and participation in tribal activities.

- **Goal:**

To enhance the audiences understanding of:

- ▶ Tribal government structures;
- ▶ Tribal cultural heritage;
- ▶ Indian traditions and protocols; and
- ▶ Environmental ethics/conditions.

- **Recommendation:**

Organize a Tribal Cultural Panel that can address the topics listed below and engage in an interactive dialogue with EPA staff.

Suggested topics for the Tribal Cultural Panel include:

- ▶ Tribal government and political systems;
- ▶ Customs, traditions and cultural practices;
- ▶ Role of prayer and invocation;
- ▶ Cultural, spirituality, and religion;
- ▶ Environmental ethics;
- ▶ Environmental program structure;
- ▶ Tribal environment and living conditions (land area, population, etc.);
- ▶ Trust resources; and
- ▶ Language, songs, arts, crafts.

Tribal panelists should be representative of the tribes from the Region. Tribes are unique, and it is important for participants to interact with tribal leaders who are from the same Region as the participants. Try to assure that panelists are not all from the same tribe. If it is difficult to secure tribal participation, Offices/Regions may want to tap other cultural sources, including in-house staff who are Native American, assistance from the EPA American Indian Advisory Council, local cultural trainers/experts, or EPA staff who are thoroughly familiar with Indian relations.

Prior to the session, the instructor should meet with the tribal panelists to provide a framework for their presentation and obtain sufficient background information. The instructor and panelists should work together in designing the cultural portion of the training program. Ideally, EPA should fund the travel costs for Tribal participation and provide speakers with sufficient background and guidance for a successful program.

At the conclusion of the panel discussion, participants should receive a copy of all the tribes located in their Region, including contact information. EPA staff should also be provided with EPA tribal liaisons/coordinators who can provide assistance.

Optional Cultural Flower Exercise

Use of this exercise should be based on the comfort level of the group to discuss potential sensitive topics of culture and race.

This exercise is used to help participants begin to think about the different cultures of which they are members. Before beginning this exercise you should point out that we are using a broad definition of culture. Sometimes participants will associate culture only with racial or ethnic group membership. A cultural group can refer to any group of people who hold common assumptions and common ways of interacting with one another. A cultural group has a distinct collective identity based on shared traditions, culture, or heritage. You may wish to give participant examples of other types of cultural groups such as gender, class, organizational, professional, or regional cultures.

When participants understand this broad conception of culture, ask them to write down or think about the names of the various groups of which they are members. During the debriefing, begin to discuss the learning about communication that we received from each of our cultural groups.

Optional Cultural Continuum Discussion

Cultural Continuum

- Low Context:
 - ▶ earned status
 - ▶ individual achievement
 - ▶ self-reliance
- ▶ scientific planned time
- ▶ competition
- High Context:
 - ▶ ascribed status

The cultural continuum is a tool that can be used to help us illustrate some fundamental ways in which cultures can vary. At the two extremes of the continuum are low-context and high-context culture that tend to exhibit very different characteristics as described below.

- A low context culture tends to emphasize:
 - ▶ earned status;
 - ▶ individual achievement;
 - ▶ self reliance;
 - ▶ independence;
 - ▶ factual/scientific thinking;
 - ▶ planned time; and
 - ▶ individual competition.

For example, communication in a low context culture is more explicit, and messages are elaborate, overt, and specific. An example would be North American courts.

- A high context culture tends to emphasize:
 - ▶ ascribed status;
 - ▶ relationships that are stable and harmonious;
 - ▶ reliance on others;
 - ▶ intuition;
 - ▶ time stretches; and
 - ▶ cooperation.

For example, communication in a high context culture tends to be implicit and much is conveyed without articulating the particular message. The non-verbal and situational context becomes very important. An example would be that in the tribal world, all forms of traditional expression—names, words, intonations, drumming, dances, masks, brush strokes, chants— have unique symbolism and are the outward manifestation of a deeper reality.

Discussion Point: Have participants describe potential conflicts that can result from differences between the low-context and high-context cultures.

Cultural Continuum References

For further background information the following references may be useful:

Augsburger, David W. (1992). *Conflict Meditation Across Cultures: Pathways and Patterns*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Know Press, 11–41.

Duryea, Michelle LeBaron. (1992). *Conflict and Culture: A Literature Review and Bibliography*. Victoria, B.C.: UVic Institute for Dispute Resolution, 35–50.

Hall, Edward T. (1989). *Beyond Culture*. New York: Anchor Books.

Ting-Toomey, Stella, and Mark Cole (1990). “Intergroup Diplomatic Communications: A Face-Negotiation Perspective.” In *Communicating For Peace: Diplomacy and Negotiation*, edited by F. Korsenny and Stella Ting-Toomey. Newbury Park, California: Sage, 77–95.

Triandis, Harry C., Richard Brislin, and C. Harry Hui. (1988). “Cross-cultural Training Across the Individualism-Collectivism Divide.” In *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 12:269–89.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY EXERCISE

TRAINER'S GUIDE FOR "ZAWAMBIA EXERCISE"

EXERCISE GOAL: To illustrate the assumptions we make about cross-cultural communication and cultural differences.

TIME FRAME: Approximately 30 minutes

MATERIALS: Exercise Instructions, Flipchart for charting observations (small breakout room if possible)

SUGGESTION: **May want to change the title of the Country of Zawambia. Some participants may be sensitive to this title.**

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Instruct audience that you will be conducting an exercise to illustrate the impact of cultural differences.
- Ask for two volunteers in the group to help you. Select two volunteers who have some obviously different characteristics. Preferably, select one woman and one man. If you have to select 2 volunteers of the same gender, be sure to find another obvious difference between the two (wears glasses/does not, skin color, etc.). Try to select participants who have been vocal and/or extraverted, as they may be more comfortable with the debriefing portion at the end of this exercise.
- Take the 2 volunteer 'consultants' out of the room and give them the "Zawambia Consultant Instruction" Sheet. Assist the 'consultants' in developing closed-ended questions that they want to ask about the Zawambian culture (questions that can only be answered with a "Yes" or "No"). Direct consultants to address their questions to different individuals in the large group, one consultant at a time (it can also work to have the consultants address the group at large).
- While consultants are out of the room, read "Zawambia Instructions" to the class. Explain the 3 rules of the Zawambian culture to the large group:
 1. You may talk only to people of the same gender (Use this only if you have selected consultants of a different gender. If you select another difference, [e.g. glasses,

- skin color] be sure to adjust rule #1 to reflect that).
 2. You have a two-word vocabulary, YES or NO
 3. Your response to any questions is based on whether the person asking the question is smiling or not. If the person is smiling, the answer is yes; if the person is not smiling, or you are not sure, the answer is no.
- Conduct a few practice questions with the large group, and be sure the audience understands the 3 rules.
 - Bring in the 2 consultants and introduce them to the large group. Instruct the consultants to begin their questions. Run this portion until the consultants run out of questions.
 - Have the 2 consultants sit in front of, or in the middle of, the room and have the consultants conduct a debriefing, while large group observes and remains quiet:
 - What observations did the consultants have of the culture?
 - What did they learn about Zawambia and the culture?
 - How do they feel about this culture?
 - Based on this experience, do they want to build the plant there?
 - After Consultants debrief, conduct a debriefing of the large group. "What was their experience with the consultants?"
 - After large group debriefing, share the Zawambia culture's 3 rules with the consultants.
 - Conduct a discussion with the entire group. Use some of the following questions to begin dialogue:
 - Did you notice anything about cross-cultural communication?
 - What did you learn about cultural differences?
 - What assumptions were made about cross-cultural communication?
 - Try to use the group dialogue to illustrate key talking points on cultural communication in Module 4. Be sure to highlight the following key learning points from the exercise. This exercise:
 1. helps to illustrate how we make assumptions about other cultures
 2. shows how we tend to create stereotypes based on our "experiences" -

good or bad

3. shows us how we tend to base our perceptions on our experiences
4. reminds us that we need to check out our assumptions.

In relation to the "Working Effectively with Tribal Governments" training program, try to relate this exercise to working in Indian country. When an EPA staff person visits an Indian Reservation, what rules might they be breaking. What assumptions or stereotypes (perhaps from previous experience) are affecting our perceptions of Native Americans? How does this affect our building to be successful at cross-cultural communication?

ZAWAMBIA CONSULTANT INSTRUCTIONS

CONGRATULATIONS on being selected as a consultant. A prestigious multinational corporation is thinking of building a production plant in Zawambia. You have been hired to make a fact-finding visit to Zawambia. Your job is to learn as much as possible about the culture of these people and prepare a report on their culture.

Your only limitation is that you must ask only “YES” or “NO” questions to the people of Zawambia. You can end your visit when you think you have obtained sufficient information for your report.

If you have any questions about the exercise, please ask them before it begins. Prepare your questions now. Do not go back into the room to start the interview until you are instructed to do so.

ZAWAMBIA INSTRUCTIONS

You are members of the old and proud culture of Zawambia. The consultants are coming here to study your culture. There are three important rules that you must learn and practice (these are the cultural norms of your society):

1. You may talk only to people of the same gender (including consultants).
2. You have a two-word vocabulary, YES and NO.
3. Your response to any questions is based on whether the person asking the question is smiling or not. If the person is smiling, the answer is YES; if the person is not smiling, the answer is NO; and if you are not sure the answer is NO.